

000157-0617

1728 U Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20009

September 11, 1980  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY JL

DATE 8/8/80

RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE

TS AUTH.

REASON ☐

ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐

DECLASSIFIED ☐ RELEASE ☒

RELEASE DENIED ☐

PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

Mr. David Korn  
Department of State  
Room 6247  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Korn:

On August 30, 1980, five Black Americans were denied admission to Israel and the Holy City of Jerusalem, were detained overnight in the Ben Gurion Airport police office and without cause or reason, were ushered against our will aboard an airplane returning to London the next morning. We, the undersigned five Black Americans, maintain that we were harassed, humiliated and denied access to the Holy Land solely because of our race.

We seek your support in obtaining a thorough investigation into this human rights violation against Black Americans who seek spiritual renewal in that Holy Land. We request your support in obtaining from the Israeli government both a written statement explaining its actions against the five Black Americans who arrived at Ben Gurion Airport, and reimbursement for the cost of flight round trip. We also seek your aid in obtaining from the Government of Israel an apology and commitment to cease leaving Black peoples access to the international city of Jerusalem.

Black Americans are taxed on the 11th day of the month that they travel through our communities, and on the 11th day of the month that they arrive in the Holy Land. This is a gross violation of the rights of Black people, and we seek your support in obtaining from the Israeli government a commitment to cease this practice, there-

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fore, to be told by an official of the Israeli government that this slap in the face is "...a very small thing." It is a matter of principle and human dignity.

We are available as a group and individually to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss in detail how you can support our endeavors to resolve this problem. We believe that all peoples have a human right to the spiritual resources available only in the Holy Land. A violation of that right is a violation against God and humanity.

A brief description follows of what occurred during the harrowing 12 hours of our confinement at Ben Gurion Airport on August 30-31, 1980. Each of us -- a minister, a lawyer, an educator, a musician, and a psychologist -- came to Israel in pursuit of spiritual growth and development. We were in violation of neither Israeli nor international laws.

We arrived at Ben Gurion Airport at approximately 8:00 p.m. Israel time. We stood in lines to get our passports cleared, wings along with the other disembarking passengers of the British Airways aircraft. We, however, were the only Blacks to arrive that night.

The minister, who also was the leader of our tour group, was the first to arrive at the customs window. While he waited to receive the appropriate stamp in his passport and the pink card that would gain him entrance to Tel Aviv, another member of our group to check the status and the baggage slip at another window. The other members of our group waited for admission to Israel. Visas are not required. However, the minister was being questioned by police officers and the group was being held in a detention facility.

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As we looked on in disbelief, the remaining four of us -- including the one person who had received both stamp and slip -- were asked to report to the airport police office where the minister had been taken.

When we arrived at the police office, an officer, Sergeant Major Daniel Elis told us that the police had telephoned the Tel Aviv Sheraton Hotel, where we had confirmed reservations, and, he claimed was told that we were not registered at that hotel.

We told the police that we knew our reservations were intact and that although we originally had planned to arrive two days earlier, our travel agency had confirmed that the hotel made an error, we were willing to give the hotel an opportunity to make amends. After first telling us that we had no reservations, officer Elis later claimed that on a second call to the hotel it was learned that we did have reservations, but for only two days. When the minister asked to telephone the hotel himself, the police refused that simple request. They also refused our call to our Embassy.

Without explanation or for any apparent reason, the police began a search of our luggage and interrogated the five of us. We later learned that officer Elis intended to search his body in addition to searching our luggage. Although we did not know why we were being subjected to these indignities, we were told that we had nothing to hide and we knew we were innocent.

When the police officer told us that we had nothing to hide, we told him that we were innocent and that we had nothing to hide.

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Shortly after 11:30 p.m., the minister again asked to use a telephone to call the United States Embassy in Israel and/or the White House in Washington, D.C., to inform some American official of our plight at the hands of the Israeli police, and to get help.

The police told us the Embassy was closed, that no one was available at that hour to hear our concerns and that we would have to wait until 5 p.m. when a more senior officer came on duty before we would be permitted a telephone.

At almost 1 a.m. on Sunday morning, August 31, 1980, we were told for the first time that we were being denied the right to enter Tel Aviv and that we would be packed onto the first British Airways airplane returning to London in the morning. At the same time our third request to use a telephone was denied.

It was 1:30 a.m. before a police officer offered food or sleeping quarters to our weary group. One hour and 45 minutes later, at 3:15 a.m., the police told us that only four members of our group would be able to sleep because only four beds are available. We all refused their "hospitality"; they insisted on piling insult atop injury.

At 2:45 a.m., our tour leader, the minister, asked Elis for a statement in writing of the charges against our group and for the reason or reasons our requests were denied to use the telephone, or proceed with our tour and visit to the Holy City of Jerusalem. Elis refused, again saying that he had to wait for his superior officer to arrive before any further steps could be taken.

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Wearv, confused, astonished, and disheartened, the five Blacks waited patiently and watched as at least seven groups of passengers, all white and seeming to come from various parts of the world, disembarked and were shepherded through the passport clearance lines without delay. As these other passengers hurried through the airport, they pointed, laughed and jeered at us.

While all the whites entered Israel freely, we saw three Arabs detained for very brief periods although neither they nor their baggage was searched. The Arabs finally were permitted through the gates into Tel Aviv. All the while the police kept insisting that they were not prejudice against us because we are Black and that our Blackness had nothing to do with their investigation and detainment of us.

At 7 a.m. Elis' superior did arrive but, we were told, he had other business to take care of before he would talk with our tour group leader. Other officers, however, again interrogated the minister for one-half hour and asked him all the same questions he had answered hours earlier. The police conferred among themselves and then one officer asked us to collect our luggage and follow him. He gave no hint as to our destination.

We followed behind as he led us to the British Airways departure terminal. Without a word, he checked our luggage onto the 9:40 a.m. airplane to London and then told us we would be permitted to make telephone calls and eat breakfast at police expense. The group refused the food and indicated that the five of us believed the police used delaying tactics to keep us from telephoning the U.S. Embassy or any others who might have assisted us through this ordeal earlier.

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The psychologist did accept use of a telephone. While away from the group she talked with the officer, He told her that the leader of our group, " the minister, had come to Israel in 1978 to confer with the leader of a Black Hebrew group that has settled in Israel and that they "suspected" an association with that group. The minister did visit Israel in 1978 and the five of us hoped to tour as much of the Holy Land as time would allow, including any settlements of fellow Black people. We had no secrets to hide. He also told the psychologist that the entire incident could have been avoided if we had obtained visas in advance. We in fact, called Ms. Simcha, upon our return, at the Washington, D.C. Israeli Consulate (483-4100 ext. 249). Ms. Simcha stated that no visa is issued in the U.S.A., "...only on arrival in Israel." Catch 22.

Shortly, we were escorted to the aircraft that would return us to London. As though we were criminals, the police officer gave our tickets and passports to an airline steward on board and told him to return our papers to us when the airplane was aloft. The airplane took off and we were returned to London. Our money was wasted and our tour of Israel and the Holy Land never took place.

We are willing and anxious to talk with anyone who will listen to our concern that this does not happen to any other Black people. By telephone we may be reached at (202) 381-2768.

Our Position Paper and Settlement Terms follow.

Sincerely,

Donald A. Butler  
Chairman  
Black American Human Rights  
Steering Committee for:  
Rev. Charles Kenyatta  
Paula Spurlink  
Myrtle D. Washington  
Gregory Ware

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### OUR POSITIONS

After our 12-hour ordeal at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, Israel, on August 30-31, 1980, we five Black Americans take the following positions:

1. The Zionist State of Israel has proven through this incident and probably others that they are racist in spirit and practice against Black Americans and other Third World people. Israel's mutual support of criminally racist South Africa bears and our experience witness to this effect.
2. Denial of entry and access to the Holy Land and the international city of Jerusalem because of race and origin of Black Americans is a violation of international accord and agreements, specifically, Article 1 and 2 of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination, 20 November, 1963.
3. Such denial also constitutes a violation of the Human Rights of Black Americans under Articles 1, 2, and 12 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted 10 December, 1948.
4. Such denial is punitive, unjust and routinely inflicted upon Black Americans.
5. Black Americans pose no economic, political, military or cultural threat to the Israeli government. Black Americans may, however, pose a moral and spiritual problem for Zionists which is more than likely rooted in their exploitation of Black Americans past and present.
6. It appears that the question of whether Zionism equals racism has been validated by this experience and indeed, Zionism is racism.\*

\*United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 1873, 22nd Session, 17 November 1967.

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Settlement Claims

As Black people we have suffered many historical injustices around the world, and we understand the need to temper a call for international intercession, with mercy. Our God has taught us that much. Mercy for the Zionist State of Israel, in the context of the humiliation we suffered without cause and great cost, is:

1. An investigation into the practice of harrassment and denial of access to the international city of Jerusalem to Black Americans, should be conducted by a team of interested parties representing the various religions and races in the United Nations and America. The investigation should include any possible Human Rights violations of Black Americans by the Israeli government.
2. A written statement giving the reason(s) for the denials; a written governmental apology to each of the five Black individuals concerned for the Human Rights violations; and a general statement of regret to any other Black Americans previously denied access to Jerusalem without cause.
3. Reimbursement of the financial resources lost to the five specific individuals concerned, and any other validated claims made by other Black Americans before or henceforth.  
Validation procedures should be determined by the majority of the investigating team.
4. An offer to tour the Holy Land made to each of the five individuals concerned and upon acceptance, safe conduct at the expense of the Israel government.

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5. A commitment to cease singling out Black Americans for harrassment, humiliation and denial of access to the international city of Jerusalem again with penalty determined by the majority of the investigating team.
6. Acceptance of United Nations supervision and implementation of the above settlement terms by Israeli government.

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## memorandum

DATE: September 29, 1980

REPLY TO  
ATTN OF:

CA/OCS/EMR - Lois G. Angulo

SUBJECT:

Memorandum of Conversation

TO: CA/OCS/EMR - Files

Participants: Black American Human Rights Steering  
Committee -- George M. Fuller, Chmn.,  
Myrtle Washington, Rev. Charles Kenyatta,  
NEA/IAI -- David A. Korn, John L. Hirsch,  
CA/OCS/EMR - Lois G. Angulo

On September 24th, a meeting was held to discuss the denial of entry into Israel to five Black Americans on August 30, 1980.

According to Mr. Fuller, the group of 5 was lead by Rev. Kenyatta and had planned to visit the Holy places in Israel. The group consisted of a minister, a lawyer, an educator, a musician, and a psychologist. Upon arrival at Ben Gurion airport, at 8:50 p.m. aboard British Airways the 5 Black Americans were stopped by airport officials. They were the only blacks aboard. Rev. Kenyatta was the first off the plane and thus the first pulled from the line of passengers.

Mr. Fuller said that he was initially processed through the first point of entry, had his passport stamped, and received a pink slip and baggage slip. However, while he waited for the other 4 members of the group, his slip was taken and "cancelled" was marked over it.

Rev. Kenyatta was escorted by airport police to the police office. The remaining 4 were also asked to report there. Rev. Kenyatta was strip searched and his luggage searched. The luggage of the other 4 was also searched.

The group was not told at anytime, despite repeated requests, why they were being held or why they were finally returned to London on British Airways 12 hours later. The group asked to call the Embassy 4 or 5 times but was refused each time. Around midnight the group was told that the Embassy was closed.

It was not until 1:30 a.m. that any food or sleeping quarters were offered to the group.

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The members of the group were asked if they knew of the Black Hebrews. They said that they had read about them in the newspapers. It was unclear whether the group told the Israeli officials or merely indicated to us, that they probably would have visited the Black Hebrews because they wanted to see everything in Israel and the Black Hebrews were a part of it.

Mr. Fuller was interested when Mr. Korn mentioned that other Black Americans had also been denied entry into Israel in the past. He is going to request, under the FOIA, copies of the cables containing their names so he can contact them. I told him that the Privacy Act prevented our releasing the names but I doubt if that stops him. He is also thinking of suing BA (which has offices in the U.S.) because the group's passports were taken by Israeli officials and given to a BA flight attendant who returned them just before the plane landed in London.

Mr. Fuller said they signed a statement written in Hebrew (which they cannot read) to the effect that no harm was done to their possessions (i.e., nothing was missing). They signed, Mr. Fuller said, because they had nothing to hide.

Rev. Kenyatta has already spoken with Sen. Javits about this as he claims to be a friend of the Senator.

FYI: A cable received from AmEmbassy Tel Aviv states that the Embassy was not notified by the police of either the overnight detention or expulsion of the group.

A protest was made to the OSI. Copies of Mr. Fuller's letter were given personally by Ambassador Lewis to the Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 9/17. The counselor for Consular Affairs gave a copy to the Assistant Director of the Ministry of Interior on 9/22. A copy was also delivered to the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D. C. The topic was also discussed by Mr. Korn with Mr. Gai Rosen, Director of the North American Division of the Israeli Foreign Ministry during his recent visit to the Department.

TO: SA (2)  
CA/CS  
CA/OCS/EMP (3)  
CA/OCS/US/NEA  
CL/PT/CB  
L/CA  
NEA IAI (2)

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